

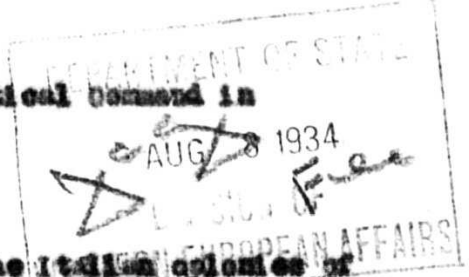
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6-6 2086-738
1934
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WAR DEPARTMENT

0-2 Report



ITALY (Aeronautical)

Subject: Organization - General
Establishment of Aeronautical Command in
North African colonies.



By decree of recent date, the aviation in the Italian colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica which operated heretofore under separate commands have been united for administration and tactical control as the "Aeronautical Command of Libya". Air Brigade General Rino Fougier has been designated as the commander.

The territorial organization of the R. Aeronautica now comprises three Air Zones with headquarters at Milan, Padua and Rome, the two Aeronautical Commands of Sicily and Sardinia, the newly organized Command of Libya, the Aviation Headquarters of Somalia and Eritrea.

The functions of the commanders of the Air Zones and Aeronautical Commands are similar to those of the Corps Area Commanders in the United States, so far as Air Force units are concerned.

The establishment of the Aeronautical Command of Libya was recommended by Air Marshal Balbo, the Governor of the colonies. It provided a post in the colonies for Balbo's close friend, Gen. Fougier, who recently was relieved as commander of the 1st. Pursuit Brigade.

NO COMMENT.

F.M. Brady
Capt. A.C. USA
Asst. M/A for Air

J. G. PILLOW, Colonel, Cavalry,
Military Attaché

AUG 9 1934

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8650.248/1

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 8650.248/2 865c.20/10 FOR #1094

FROM Egypt (Allen) DATED Oct.15, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING:

Construction of airports by the Italian Army in Libya at El Gabel El Akhdar, Jaraboub and Kufra, ostensibly in preparation for a commercial air line from Tripoli to Ethiopia.

8650.248/2
8650.248/2

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.248/3 865c.20/14 FOR #1104

FROM Egypt (Allen) DATED Oct.25, 1937
 TO NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING: Italian aviation force in Libya.

Opinion of British Military Mission in Egypt that Egypt would be helpless in face of an attack from Libya as the Italians are said to have 300 planes in Libya and have developed excellent landing facilities.

865d.248/3
865c.248/3

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865c.20/15 FOR #1111

FROM Egypt (Allen) DATED October 29, 1938
TO NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING: Strength of Italian Air Force in Libya.
Comments on the --.

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865C.248/4

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE ~~865A.00/21~~ 865c.00/91 FOR ~~#628~~

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED Nov. 3, 1937

TO NAME 1-1127 GPO
(Enclosing report of October 8, 1937 from Mr. Jay Walker, Cairo)

REGARDING: Aviation - military air bases -- Libya.
Advises of the military air bases established at
"Castle Benito" and at "Benina".

865B.248/4

865C.248/5

Aviation.

5658.248
Great developments have taken place in the field of aviation since the appointment of Air-Marshal Balbo as Governor General of the colony in 1933. New important military air bases have been established at "Castle Benito", some seventeen miles south-east of Tripoli, and at "Benina", between Bengasi and El Biar. Less important bases have also been erected at such strategical points as Nalut, Gadames, and Gat along the western frontier; also at Murzuch, Erach, and Hun in the interior of Tripolitania. Sirte, approximately half way between Tripoli and Bengasi on the coast, is well equipped as an air base for both military and civilian purposes.

On the Cirenaica side of the colony, in addition to the main base at "Benina", military air fields have been constructed near the coast at El Ftaiiah near Derna, Tobruch, and Amseat, while Giarabub and Cufra on the Egyptian border in the distant interior are known to be well equipped military air centres.

In addition to the air bases, a series of emergency landing fields, known in the colony as "campo di

fortuna"

fortuna" have been prepared. These fields are merely land-marked designations with wind signals where planes may make a forced landing on fairly level ground. Two Arab soldiers are taken to each emergency field every week where they live nearby in a dugout until relieved a week later. The decision to establish emergency landing fields resulted from the number of forced landings of military patrol planes in barren uninhabited regions.

9658 308
Special facilities have also been made at Tobrukh to equip that port as a naval air base. Italian passenger planes flying between Italy and East Africa use the "Mellaha" field at Tripoli, and the old military air port at Bengasi.

The "Castel Benito" air base is reported from good sources to have cost about sixty-five million lire. This sum was spent in leveling off sand dunes to give the field an even surface, installation of water sprinkling system to keep the sandy surface moist during the long hot seasons, construction of four steel hangars, technical accessories including underground storage facilities for gas and explosive bombs, and gasoline storage tanks. A number of barracks have also been built near the field for the commissioned and non-commissioned personnel.

The "Benina" air base near Bengasi is reported to be slightly smaller in size and equipment than the new air base near Tripoli.

The importance which the Italian government places in its aviation services in Libya may be indicated by the completion, in March 1937, of a new elaborately con-

structed building on the sea boulevard at Tripoli as headquarters for the air forces. The reputed cost is about five million lire.

It was estimated that in March 1937, there were about 325 military planes of various types held for service at the several bases in the colony. The commissioned and non-commissioned personnel were continuously being increased, up to that date, by new arrivals every week from Italy. At the time, it was thought there were probably between seven and eight hundred in the commissioned personnel and a much larger force of non-commissioned men.

DOCUMENT FILE
NOTE

SEE 883.248/10 FOR #1177
FROM Egypt (Morris) DATED Jan.18, 1938
TO NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING: Italian air force in Libya.

Memorandum by Vice Consul Jay Walker giving information concerning-
in connection with possible Italian aggression in Egypt.

865C.248/6

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE DIVISION
WAR DEPARTMENT

Nov 2, 1938

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Assistant Secretary of War
Secretary, General Staff

✓ G-1

G-3

G-4

✓ War Plans Division

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G-2 Report

OFFICE CHIEF
MIL. INTE. DIV.
6-6 2086-738
14
OCT 31 1938
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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ITALY (Aviation - Military)

Subject: Personnel - General

Personnel for Colonial Air Garrisons in Libya and East Africa

In compliance with request contained in Memo, Evaluation of Reports from M/A Rome, dated September 23, 1938, the following information is submitted:

As shown in Italy report No. 16,624-9180 dated June 1, 1938, there are stationed in Libya:

6 squadrons of pursuit and attack)
8 " of bombardment) of the Aerial Army

The personnel of these squadrons is included in the figures for the Metropolitan Air Force.

Furthermore, there are stationed in Libya:

6 squadrons for Colonial Garrison

The personnel assigned to these squadrons is not included in the figures for the Metropolitan Air Force. Its strength may be estimated as follows:

	Officers	Men	Total
Pilots	30	50	80
Non-flying	40	240	280
	70	290	360
Observers (from Army)			24
Medical officers			8

The units stationed in East Africa include 4 pursuit squadrons and 40 mixed squadrons for Colonial Garrison. The personnel assigned to these squadrons is also not included in the figures for the Metropolitan Air Force. The only available figures on the strength of this personnel are those given in Italy report No. 16,019-9100 dated May 26, 1937. This strength may be tabulated as follows:

	Officers	Men	Total
Pilots	300	400	700
Non-flying	430	11,200	11,630
	730	11,600	12,330
Observers (from Army)			80
Medical officers			40

G. H. Paine
Col. F.A. USA
Military Attaché

Central File: Decimal File 865C.248, Internal Affairs Of States, Equipment And Supplies., Libya, Aircraft. Accidents.Landing Fields. Stations., Oct. 15, 1937 - Nov. 2, 1938. October 15, 1937 - November 2, 1938. MS European Colonialism in the Early 20th Century. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, [link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5109726367%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/FSC5109726367/FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC). Accessed 18 June 2025.